



**File Code:** 1950 and 2720

**Date:** June 28, 2021

Letter to the File  
2020 Outfitter-and-Guide Priority-use Permit Reissuance

USDA Forest Service  
Red Rock Ranger District, Coconino National Forest  
Yavapai and Coconino Counties

The Red Rock Ranger District proposes to re-issue 17 priority-use permits related to outfitter-and-guide activities, including Jeep tours, balloon rides and metaphysical tours. It is required that commercial entities be permitted to operate on Forest Service lands. These outfitter-and-guide operations take place throughout the 550,000-acre Red Rock Ranger District. Priority use permits will be reissued without competition FSH 2709.14(53.1m)(4), 36 CFR 251.64(a). Reissuing and amending these permits provide a broad range of outfitter and guide services to the general public while enhancing the economic sustainability of the greater Sedona area. (See below table for names of providers and types of use.)

The permit re-issuances fall under 36 CFR 220.6(d)(11): "Issuance of a new special use authorization to replace an existing or expired special use authorization, when such issuance is to account only for administrative changes, such as a change in ownership of authorized improvements or expiration of the current authorization, and where there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or magnitude of authorized activities. The applicant or holder must be in compliance with all the terms and conditions of the existing or expired special use authorization."

Three of the 17 permitted companies (360 Adventures, Boynton Canyon Management Company, and Hermosa Tours) would have additional trails added to their authorizations. One permitted company (Western Spirit) would have camping added to their authorization. One permitted company (Sedona Fly Fishing) will have additional user days added to their authorization. Actions to amend permits would be authorized under 36 CFR 220.6(d)(12): "Issuance of a new authorization or amendment of an existing authorization for recreation special uses that occur on existing roads or trails, in existing facilities, in existing recreation sites, or in areas where such activities are allowed."

Currently, different expiration dates exist amongst the 17 permitted companies.

- Seven permits expired on 12/31/2020; these are currently in use with an amended expiration date of 6/30/2021.
- Four permits are to expire on 06/30/2021
- Six permits are to expire on 07/31/2021

All reissued priority-use permits are to be in effect January 1 to December 31, to provide consistency amongst authorizations and to allow for a more efficient Forest Service workflow. Each company will have their priority use permit reissued for a term of ten years as per US Forest Service policy.

**Scoping:** When scoped on Sept. 23, 2020, the project was originally scoped under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(15) and 220.6(d)(10). Because both of those categorical exclusions are now reserved per updated National Environmental Policy Act modifications, the categories to be used in this project have changed to those



noted above. To complete the NEPA process, a letter to the file will be completed rather than a decision memo. This letter to the file will be uploaded to the project webpage:  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58853>.

Comments received during scoping were considered. The 16 responses to this project raised the following issues:

- Hot air balloon noise upon take-off and jeep tours along permitted roads; both concerns are from a new sub-division that was constructed during the term of the current permit. Response: permitted company are using quieter generators and alternative launch sites are being investigated.
- Limit permitted use and permit term length. Response: Not allowed by USFS policy.
- Create "quiet periods" where permitted companies are not allowed on trails and roads. Response: Outfitter and Guide activities not associated with day-use only sites will not be restricted.
- Increase the fees to permitted companies from 3% to 10% and donate the excess to public schools. Response: Not allowed by USFS policy.
- The accumulation of dust from motorized traffic on forest roads. Response: authorized routes are level XX routes.
- Out-of-scope public responses unrelated to this project included:
  - increases in rental ATV's and UTV's and associated disturbance
  - illegal camping and campfires
  - recreational shooting
  - greenhouse gas emissions from motorized vehicles
  - forest-user trash accumulation

**Resource Reviews:** Archaeological, botanical, hydrology, and wildlife reviews have been completed for the project area. Changes in the existing authorizations either did not occur or were of such minor significance that no additional mitigations are required.

**Implementation Timeline:** Implementation of the proposed project would occur immediately.

**Project Contact:** For additional information concerning this decision, contact Mark Goshorn, recreation special uses program manager, Red Rock Ranger District, 8375 State Route 179, Sedona, AZ, 86351, or by calling (928) 203-7525.

Sincerely,

Amy Tinderholt  
Red Rock Ranger District, District Ranger





Company	Type/Use	Expiration Date	Changes	Change Request details	Issues Raised by the Public
360 Adventures	Hiking/Mtn. Biking	07/31/21	Yes	Adding additional hiking trips	None
Arizona ATV Adventures (Sedona Outdoor LLC)	ATV Tours	06/30/21	No		None
Arizona Safari Jeep Tours	Jeep Tours	07/31/21	No		None
Boynton Canyon Management Co.	Hiking/Mtn. Biking	06/30/21	Yes	Swap some hiking trips for bike trips; no overall increase in use	None
Crossing World Journeys	Metaphysical Hiking	12/31/20	No		None
Free Soul Public Education	Metaphysical Hiking	12/31/20	No		None
Hermosa Tours	Hiking/Mtn. Biking/Shuttle	07/31/21	No	Adding additional trails to complete a loop, no overall increase in use	None
M Diamond Ranch	Equestrian	07/31/21	No		None
Northern Light Balloon Expeditions	Hot-Air Balloon	12/31/20	No		New subdivision below authorized take-off area, complaints about early morning noise disturbance
Rainbow Adventures LLC	Jeep Tours	12/31/20	No		Jeeps traveling on authorized route behind new subdivision – noise complaint
Red Rock Balloon Adventures	Hot-Air Balloon	12/31/20	No		None
Sedona Destination Adventures	Mtn. Biking/Shuttle	06/30/21	No		None
Sedona Fly Fishing	Fly Fishing	12/31/2023 amendment to use only	Yes	Increase use days from 100 days per year to 300 days per year.	None
Sedona Nature Excursions	Metaphysical Hiking	12/31/20	No		None
Sedona Trolley II	Trolley Tours	07/31/21	No		None
Spirit Steps	Metaphysical Hiking	12/31/20	No		None
Vaughan's Southwest Custom Tours	Van Tours	07/31/21	No		None
Western Spirit	Mtn. Biking	06/30/21	Yes	Add dispersed camping to permit	None